

Devotional and Selections

"HOPE THOU IN GOD."

"Keep up your optimism. The world is better than it was when you and I were boys. There is more honesty in trade, more sympathy for the unfortunate, a higher tone of morality in private and public life, and a deeper and wider spirit of evangelism in the churches. 'The Lord reigneth; let the earth rejoice; let the multitude of isles be glad thereof.'"

These sentences from the conclusion of a letter received by the writer recently from a venerable and beloved brother, minister of a sister church. I have known him somewhat intimately for some years past, and entertain for him a reverential regard because of his cultured intelligence, noble character and consecrated Christian life. His testimony to the present state of society and the Church is cheering—adapted to inspire hope and to awaken and sustain continued and enlarged effort in behalf of the betterment of mankind. It must be confessed that there is much in the news items that come to us daily by observation as well as from all parts of our own land and from foreign nations to depress and cause a feeling of hopelessness. But along with these are found messages of a different purport, showing that there is a social and religious awakening among the people of God and among good citizens everywhere, which, under the divine guidance, gives promise of blessed and ever enlarging results. There seems to be a deeper and wider feeling of individual responsibility, leading up to more individual work, while the church, as a whole, appears to realize as never before its mission to send out laborers into the field of the world, with the purpose of winning souls to God and extending the Messiah's kingdom throughout all the earth.

At home and abroad much remains to be done, and it behooves every sincere Christian, old and young, male and female, to bear his part of the burden and overtake his full share of personal service. God is our hope; he will be our help, and sooner or later, his kingdom shall rule in all hearts and homes. R. M.

Richmond, Va.

Christianity is not a voice in the wilderness, but a life in the world. It is not an idea in the air, but feet on the ground, going God's way. It is not an exotic to be kept under glass, but a hardy plant to bear twelve manner of fruits in all kinds of weather. Fidelity to duty is its root and branch. Nothing we can say to the Lord, no calling him by great or dear names, can take the place of the plain doing of his will. We may cry out about the beauty of eating bread with him in his kingdom, but it is wasted breath and a rootless hope, unless we plow and plant in his kingdom here and now. To remember him at his table and to forget him at ours is to have invested in bad securities. There is no substitute for plain, everyday goodness.—Maltbie D. Babcock.

PRAYER.

God of peace, who didst bring again from the dead the Lord Jesus, grant that we, being united to him by faith, may die with him unto sin and may rise with him into newness of life. As thou hast called us to be saints, make us worthy of our calling. By patient bearing of thy will, by works of Christlike charity, by diligent endeavor to spread abroad the gospel, may we serve our brethren and glorify thy name. Finally, make us to be numbered with thy saints in glory everlasting. Amen.

RELIGION—POETRY.

From the very beginning religion and poetry have walked together hand in hand. The oldest literary production is the sublime poem of Job. The oldest book—the Bible—contains the poetical writings, elegiac, lyric and idyllic, of David, Solomon, Isaiah, and most of the prophets. The origin and earliest application of poetry is traced to the service of religion, in the hymns and choral chants to Jehovah in the temple. Asaph, Heman and Jeduthun not only directed the instrumental music in public worship, but were also excellent composers of hymns or sacred poems. "To give force and energy to the devout affections was the employment of the sacred muses," says Horne in his introduction to the "Study of the Scriptures."

"The poetry of the Hebrews derives its chief excellence from its being dedicated to religion. Nothing can be conceived more elevated, more beautiful, or more elegant than the composition of the Hebrew bards. * * The Hebrew poet who worshipped Jehovah as the sovereign of his people—who believed all the laws, whether sacred or civil, which he was bound to obey, to be a divine enactment—and who was taught that man was dependent upon God for everything—meditated upon nothing but Jehovah; to him he devoutly referred all things, and placed his supreme delight in celebrating the divine attributes and perfections."

Those who, either from their own engagements and hurry of business, or from indolence, or from conceit and vanity, have neglected looking out of themselves, have from that time not only ceased to advance and improve their performances, but have gone backward. They may be compared to men who have lived upon their principal, till they are reduced to beggary, and left without resources.—Sir Joshua Reynolds.

Let every man be occupied, and occupied in the highest employment of which his nature is capable, and die with the consciousness that he has done his best.—Goethe.

It may not be possible for a young man to measure life; but it is possible to say, I am resolved to put life to its noblest and best use.—T. T. Munger.

The enterprise of Christian missions is the greatest enterprise being carried on upon this earth. There is no work that lies nearer the heart of God; no work in which he is more manifestly present.